



## BURNS INTERAGENCY FIRE ZONE

28910 Hwy 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738  
(541) 573-4545 (p), (541) 573-4410 (f)  
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/fire/index.php>

## NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2007

Contact: Tara Martinak

Release No. OR-020-07-29

BLM

### ***WILDFIRE SEASON IN HARNEY COUNTY GETS AN EARLY START***

**HINES, Oregon** – Wildfire season in Harney County is off to an early start this year. With few hard rains in the fall, a winter without adequate snow, and minimal spring rain, the moisture deficit is easy to see. The premature dry conditions left Burns Interagency Fire Zone (BIFZ) firefighters tackling eight wildfires last month. Fire Management Officer Mike Morcom said, "Although eight is not a significant increase in the number of May wildfires for Harney County, the actual number of acres burned for the period is nearly 30 times that of last season."

In 2006, wildfires scorched over 149,000 acres in Harney County. Less than 4 of those acres came during the month of May as opposed to this year where we've already burned 115 acres. Morcom continued, "So far, our largest wildfires have been human caused, from abandoned campfires." Restrictions regarding campfire use on public lands are not yet in effect for Harney County, but the possibility is just around the corner.

Nationwide, 75% of all wildfires are human caused. These accidental fires endanger communities, cost taxpayers millions of dollars every year to suppress, and can cause long-term damage to the environment. As a reminder, public land users should never leave a campfire unattended and always drown a fire with water and dirt when leaving the site. Even a slight breeze can quickly cause a campfire to spread beyond a fire ring or an area clear of flammable material. Carrying a shovel and extra water and leaving a fire cool to the touch is the best advice to follow to avoid starting a wildfire yourself.

Fuel and weather conditions in Harney County are changing quickly. Grasses, shrubs, brush and even dense forest stands are drier than in most years at this time, and our current temperatures are comparable to those traditionally in late-June. Morcom added, "Even if we get the rain we need in June, unless it continues, things will dry out quickly in July and August. We still want people to get out and enjoy their public lands; we just want them to use caution and common sense so we can all *continue* to enjoy them."

Fire Danger is Moderate and the Industrial Fire Precaution Level is a level 1.

For more information on wildfire activity, public use restrictions or regulated fire closures, call the Burns Interagency Communication Center at (541) 573-4545.

